

Heavy Cigarette Smokers Cautioned by Heart Group

By Philip S. Cook

The American Heart Association warned in a report issued yesterday that heavy cigarette smoking may contribute to or hasten the development of coronary heart disease.

In its most definitive statement to date on the possible connection between smoking and the nation's leading cause of death and disability, the association stopped considerably short of finding any direct cause-and-effect relationship. Said the report:

"Up to the present, a number of medical studies have been made, nearly all demonstrating a statistical association between heavy cigarette smoking and mortality (death) or morbidity (illness) from coronary heart disease. In these studies, death rates from coronary heart disease (heart attacks) in middle-

aged men were found to be from 50 to 150 per cent higher among heavy cigarette smokers than among those who do not smoke. This statistical association does not prove that heavy cigarette smoking causes coronary heart disease, but the data strongly suggest that heavy cigarette smoking may contribute to or accelerate the development of coronary heart disease or its complications."

Timothy V. Hartnett, chairman of the Tobacco Industry Research Committee, said in a statement:

"The American Heart Association's new statement on smoking raises its own questions and doubts. The statement admits lack of evidence to implicate tobacco use in the development of cardiovascular disease."

"We certainly welcome the

A. H. A.'s recognition of the need for continued research in this area of cardiovascular disease and tobacco use. We will continue, as in the past, to offer our fullest co-operation in this effort. Research results in the past few years have shown that many previous ideas about tobacco's effect on the cardiovascular system were wrong.

"Particularly significant is the recognition by the A. H. A. that biological and medical research does not support the idea of a causal relationship between smoking and coronary heart disease."

The A. H. A. Report

The A. H. A. report, which was made public by Dr. A. Carlton Ernstene, association president, was prepared by a special ad hoc committee on smoking headed by Dr. Louis N. Katz, chief of the cardiovascular department, Michael Reese Hospital, Chicago, and a former A. H. A. president. It was approved by the association's board of directors here Saturday at a semi-annual meeting at the Sheraton-Atlantic Hotel.

The board recommended that the full report, together with supporting documentation, be published officially in the July issue of "Circulation," the association's monthly scientific journal, and released to the public at the same time.

"A misleading and unauthorized release on the statement by a New York newspaper... now makes it necessary, in the public interest, to issue the official statement," Dr. Ernstene said.

Statistical Relation

While there is still no experimental or laboratory proof of a causal relationship between cigarette smoking and heart disease, Dr. Ernstene said, the public should carefully weigh the statistical association apparent in recent studies. He urged individuals wishing advice regarding their use of cigarettes to be guided by their physicians. Medical advice is particularly important for persons with a history of heart or blood-vessel disease, Dr. Ernstene said.

The Katz committee reportedly looked into a dozen scientific studies which included data relating to smok-

ing and heart disease. The committee members then recommended that the A. H. A. undertake a campaign to discourage smoking among teenagers and persons known to be susceptible to heart trouble. The group also urged an aggressive program of continued research into the issue.

After lengthy discussion at two general meetings, the 120-man board of directors of the Heart Association decided that the Katz committee report should be limited strictly to scientific data. In the absence of a clear-cut causal relationship between cigarette smoking and heart disease any more advanced position would be premature, the board felt.

Katz Is Silent

Moreover, an association spokesman said yesterday the directors were convinced that both a broad educational campaign and any major new study devoted solely to proving or disproving a causal relationship between smoking and heart disease would be beyond the means of the association. Dr. George E. Wakerlin, the association's research director, feels that a proper scientific study would cost "\$1,000,000 or more a year."

When reached by telephone at his Chicago office yesterday, Dr. Katz declined to comment.

The policy of the American Heart Association, Dr. Wakerlin said, has been to avoid "dictating" the type of research performed by the nation's scientists. The association, he said, prefers to support selected activities put forth by the scientists themselves. It will continue this pattern in the coming fiscal year starting July 1, when the A. H. A. and its affiliated state and local chapters jointly devote more than \$9,000,000 in support of research.

A spokesman for the tobacco research group noted that the A. H. A.'s statement states clearly that the statistical association reported in some surveys "does not prove that heavy cigarette smoking causes coronary heart disease."

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Cigarettes and Heart Disease

The American Heart Association in a recent statement warning that heavy cigarette smoking may contribute to or hasten the development of coronary heart disease doesn't pretend to have proof of any definite and direct cause-and-effect relationship. Yet the concern shown by the association in its studies on coronary ailments suggests that its observations deserve serious consideration.

"Up to the present," the association said, "a number of medical studies have been made, nearly all demonstrating a statistical association between heavy cigarette smoking and mortality (death) or morbidity (illness) from coronary heart disease. In these studies, death rates from coronary heart disease (heart attack) in middle aged men were found to be from 50 to 150 per cent higher among heavy cigarette smokers than among those who do not smoke. This statistical association does not prove that heavy cigarette smoking causes coronary heart disease, but the data strongly suggest that heavy cigarette smoking may contribute to or accelerate the development of coronary heart disease or its complications."

The Heart Association makes it clear that "statistical association" does not in itself prove that the cigarette is to blame. And in many studies which have been made in recent years no positive, clear-cut link between cigarette smoking and coronary disease has been established.

As a rule, the cigarette-heart disease reports emphasize "heavy" smoking. This, of course, may mean one thing to certain smokers and something else to others. However, the cigarette smoker should get from the association's warning and from the many previous discussions of cigarettes and their possible relation to heart troubles the general idea that if one must smoke, he should do so with moderation.

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